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The Fight Master



JOURNAL
OF THE
SOCIETY
OF
AMERICAN
FIGHT
DIRECTORS

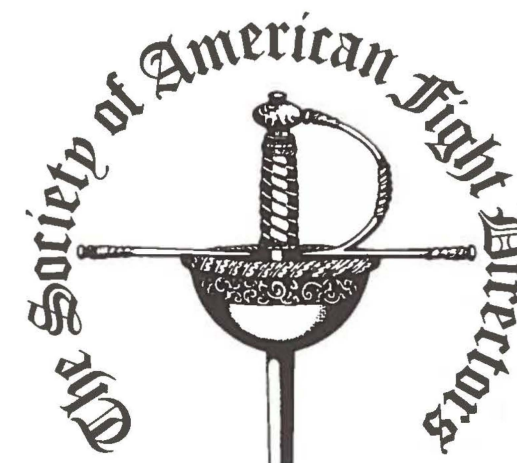
FALL/
WINTER
1996
VOLUME
XIX
NUMBER 2

The Fight Master

is a publication of

The Society of American Fight Directors

DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND SAFETY OF STAGE COMBAT



Founded in 1977, the Society of American Fight Directors is a non-profit organization of theater professionals, academicians, friends and supporters, all of whom share a common interest in the art of stage violence. The SAFD stands for the very highest standard in effective and safe theatrical fighting.

The SAFD has developed recognized standards for four levels of skill in the stage combat arts.

ACTOR/COMBATANT

The actor/combant is an individual who has received basic training in three to six weapon forms and passed a proficiency skills test. The actor/combant certificate expires three years from the date of issue, but is renewable through a re-testing process. The actor/combant certificate does not qualify an individual to teach stage combat or to arrange fight scenes. But it does signify SAFD recognition of this individual as a safe, competent performer.

TEACHER

A certified teacher of stage combat is an individual who has first passed the actor/combant proficiency skills test and, in addition, had extensive educational training and passed SAFD tests in teaching techniques, historical styles, weapons theory and practice, and stage choreography. The SAFD endorses certified teachers to teach stage combat.

FIGHT MASTER

A fight master is an individual who has completed all requirements of an actor/combant and a certified teacher. Beyond this, he or she must have a strong professional background, have choreographed a minimum of twenty union productions and passed an extensive oral, written and practical examination. Fight masters are endorsed by the SAFD to teach, coach, and choreograph in professional theatre, film and television, and in the academic arena.

The *Fight Master* is printed on recycled paper.



Actors on Guard

A Practical Guide for the Use of the Rapier and Dagger for Stage and Screen

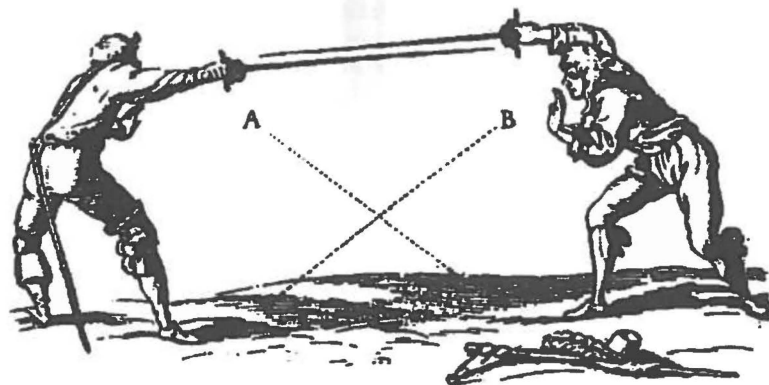
Dale Anthony Girard

Actors on Guard is the most comprehensive and detailed book on the art of theatrical swordplay available today. It provides the reader with the historical, theoretical and practical basis for learning, practicing and presenting theatrical sword fights. Focusing specifically on the Elizabethan rapier and dagger (the most popular weapons used in stage fights), *Actors on Guard* provides actors, directors, teachers, stage managers and technicians the skills and knowledge essential to presenting safe and effective fights, both for stage and screen.

Actors on Guard takes the reader through the complex process of selecting safe stage weapons, learning the basic handling and maintenance of the rapier and dagger, as well as how to safely move and interact in the potentially dangerous process of theatrical swordplay.

This unique book provides the reader with hundreds of practical exercises in the care and handling of stage weapons, and is fully illustrated with over 300 detailed line-drawings and historical plates. Included are sections on footwork, guards, parries, cutting and thrusting techniques, blade taking actions, disarms, kills and wounds with the sword, and all are described in great detail with every safety precaution spelled out to avoid any accident or injury. *Actors on Guard* also takes its techniques out of the classroom and onto the stage by providing information on melding the acting process with mechanics of a stage fight and procedures for safely rehearsing and running a fight within a production.

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The Fight Master

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BY JEFF A.R. JONES

When 22 fighters gather, teachers, fight masters, and actor/combatants to teach, work out, talk out common problems and exchange ideas, the result is the first Certified Teacher/Fight Master retreat.

21 THE PARTNERING PARADIGM

BY BRIAN BYRNES AND
RICKI G. RAVITTS

The right pair of partners can lift a fight to a level seemingly beyond the skill of either individual. And the wrong partner can foul you up royally. What makes a good partner? What kind are you?

23 THE ACTOR'S PHYSIQUE: A CAULDRON OF THE PSYCHE

BY BILL LENGFELDER

Imagine choreographing fights that showcase your lead actor, who happens to be confined to a wheelchair. The challenges involved can lead to some rewarding discoveries.

28 WORKING AND LIVING IN L.A.

BY ROBERT GOODWIN

There's no business quite as grim as show business. Some insights and hard truths about the life of an actor/combatant hustling work on the West Coast. As well as his suggestions for the SAFD.

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Editorially Speaking



BY
MARGARET
RAETHER

THIS ISSUE FOCUSES ON SPECIFIC PROBLEMS RELATING TO STAGE COMBAT.

Topics range from how to define (and be) a successful partner in a fight ("The Partnering Paradigm") to getting the film and television industry to take one seriously ("Working and Living in L.A.") to choreographing fights for a physically challenged actor combatant ("The Actor's Physique: A Cauldron of the Psyche.")

Workshops, workshops, workshops: catch up on what is happening workshop-wise in Portugal, Canada, Washington D.C., and last summer in Las Vegas in the workshop reports included in this issue.

A note on this issue: it is being published a couple of months behind schedule due to some changes in how that happens, i.e. new printer, new mail service, and the changes within the SAFD itself. We are back on track now and you can look for the Spring/Summer *Fight Master* Vol. XX, No. 1 — celebrating the SAFD's 20th anniversary) in late spring. If you have photos from the SAFD's early days, please get in touch with me as the issue ahead will be looking back.

Margaret Raether

about the Cover

the duc de Villars

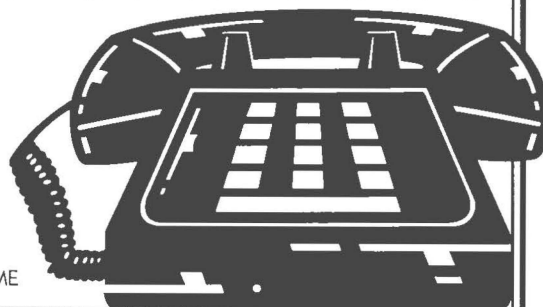
Claude Louis Hector, the duc de Villars, leads an attack against an Allied entrenchment at Denain, July 24, 1712, during the War of the Spanish Succession. The figure of Claude Louis is a detail from the painting *Bataille de Denain*, by Jean Alaux.

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EASTERN STANDARD TIME



The Fight Master

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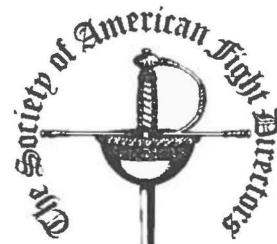
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*Submitted material may be edited
for clarity and length.*



Letters



DEM BONES, DEM BONES

I am a student of Master David Woolley at Columbia College in Chicago. While in rehearsal for a combat project, I came across a way to simulate the sound of broken bones. It is most effective in moves where the neck or vertebrae are damaged, however it can be applied to any bone desired.

The attacker or victim inconspicuously places a dry, uncooked rigatoni noodle in their mouth. When it is time for the devastating move to be applied, the fighter bites down on the noodle in sync with the action, KER-SNAP!

The biting action needs to be worked at a speed that coincides with the movement. If the bone(s) are a slow break, let your molars work as a steady vise, producing random snaps and pops. If this method inhibits the oncoming delivery of lines (pasta shrapnel) It can be executed off stage or from a wing. I call this the noodle neck snap. Fight on!

Ryan Oliver
Chicago

JOINING IN THE FIGHT

Though very proud of the critical impact that SAFD members desire to have on the theatrical community, I'm admittedly dismayed that I haven't seen any visible SAFD involvement in

another critical cause: the fight on AIDS. Having only been a member for five years, I admit my statement may be an oversight; if so, I retract it. If, however, it is an innocent oversight, allow me to address the issue.

My wife and I have volunteered for and arranged benefits for AIDS service organizations for years; primarily for Broadway Cares/Equity fights AIDS. By issuing millions of dollars in grants to the AIDS Initiative of the Actor's FUnd and to AIDS service organizations nationwide, BC/EFA is the entertainment industry's most active and vital organization addressing the challenges of AIDS.

What can you do? If you are in a show, BC/EFA suggests direct audience appeals, donations made in lieu of opening night gifts, autographed poster sales, or special cabaret performances.

I have often remarked at the irony of the SAFD acronym, which, if sounded out, is safety. What better message to associate with the ever-present threat of AIDS? I will be delighted to help SAFD members to get involved by offering ideas and advice. Please feel free to call me at 212-840-0770 (or fax me at 840-0551). Thank you for your time, interest, and assistance.

Scott Galbraith
New York



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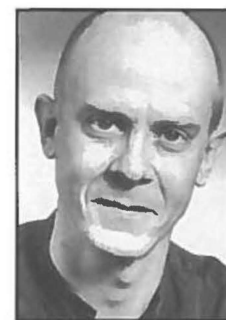
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from the **President**



BY
**DREW
FRACHER**

HOWDY, FOLKS. I HOPE THAT EACH OF YOU IS WELL AND THAT YOUR WORK IS KEEPING YOU HAPPY AND NOTHING LESS. I'VE BEEN PUZZLING OVER THIS LATEST

chance to rattle on to you, trying to decide what, on the list of news, is most important.

First of all, I appeal to each of you to keep the secretary and the treasurer apprised of any changes of address that you might have. We've set a goal for ourselves to try and keep better tabs on the roster and to make sure that you, the membership, receive the publications and the services that your membership pays for.

Moved? Tell us!

Paul Dennhardt has taken over as SAFD Secretary and his current address, along with all of the officers, Fight Masters, Certified Teachers, Regional Reps. and others are listed in the back of this journal. We have no way of knowing if you have moved unless you tell us, and by keeping us up to date with your life we can continue to be a part of it. This is especially important in regards to the next issue at hand.

making decisions of policy and procedure.

A new level

The new bylaws will propose a new level of professional status — that of Fight Director. This level will apply to individuals from the ranks of Fight Master and Certified Teacher that qualify under new professional standards, and the SAFD will support these individuals as professional fight choreographers.

These are a couple of the major changes proposed. Most of the rest are less noticeable. No matter how large they are, however, you will all be asked to vote on them and to bring the SAFD into the new century with a new attitude. An attitude that is comprised of equal voices for all members; one of a united professional front that will prove us to be the standard for the industry; one of a group of professionals dedicated to the safety and aesthetics of good stage fighting.

Beginning a whole new era

I feel strongly that we are on the verge of a whole new era for the SAFD and I'm proud to be a part of this wonderful family. Look for the proposed new bylaws in the mail soon. Let me know what you think and let's get organized and keep the momentum rolling. My best to each of you; be well and fight safely.

Peace,

Drew Fracher
President

New bylaws in the works

As I mentioned in the Spring/Summer issue, the officers and I are working on a rewrite of the bylaws that is designed to bring the SAFD a bit more into the present in terms of operation, policy and procedure. This will entail quite a bit of information being presented to each of you for your perusal, and *The Cutting Edge* will be the forum for this info to get to you (thus my plea in the first paragraph).

I am hopeful that by the first of the year we will have a rewrite of the bylaws of the organization ready for your examination. It will contain proposed changes in the voting structure of the organization: employing a representative elected from each level of status within the organization to join the officers in

P.S. I am proposing some amendments and changes to our current bylaws and will be calling for a vote of the membership for ratification within the next couple of months. Be on the lookout for further information.

Thanks again. Be well.

■ ■ ■

The Society of American Fight Directors
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Geoffrey Alm, assistant

Quarterstaff
and Smallsword
Drew Fracher
Michael Chin, assistant

Rapier and Dagger
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K. Jenny Jones, asst.

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THE RESULTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOPS IN LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

WITH OVER EIGHTY-ONE STUDENTS, teachers and staff, the 1996 National Stage Combat Workshops held last summer at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada were busting at the seams. The NSCW continues to attract the brightest and best students nationally and abroad for an intensive training program that is without comparison. This year's staff and offerings proved an exceptional opportunity for growth for actors, movement teachers, movement professionals and the sword lover.

In the Actor Combatant Workshop (ACW) over forty-four students arrived on July 15 and trained intensively in rapier and dagger, broadsword, unarmed, quarterstaff, and smallsword techniques for the next three weeks. The ACW Fight Masters Beardsley, Boushey, Fracher and Suddeth provided these students with personal and quality instruction.

The AACW

The Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop was led by Fight Masters Richard Raether and Christopher Villa and provided an exciting 'actor' structured advanced workshop.

The AACW was supported by Teaching Assistants Brian Byrnes, Jeff AR Jones, Ricki Ravitts, and journeyed by Mike Mahaffey. These talented individuals constituted an exceptional teaching staff.

Weapons Night

The highlight of the first week of the NSCW, after the the opening night party, is, without a doubt, weapons night. This year was no exception as it provided participants with a veritable plethora of fine stage weapons, exceptional literature, and a quick class in six-gun showmanship and bullwhip cracking.

With armorer extraordinaire Lewis Shaw of Vulcan Forge and American Fencers in attendance, the supplier's category was punctuated by the arrival of Mark Allen of Mark Allen Productions. Mark brought his stage six-guns, bullwhips, literature and Yankee wit to a lecture/demonstration on the basic safe uses of six-guns and bullwhips. It was an exciting, excellent evening and we hope to see everyone back next year.

Friday Night Awards

This year's workshop witnessed a new approach to the final week of activities. The Friday night performance was eliminated in

favor of a casual ceremony that highlighted the 1996 NSCW Award recipients. This format proved to be an exciting event that allowed the NSCW staff to focus more on the students and student needs as the workshops advanced toward the Skills Proficiency Test on Friday.

Friday Night at the Awards proved to be an exciting, relaxed and pleasurable evening for all. And it allowed the staff the opportunity to tidy up the necessary particulars and head to closing night festivities a bit earlier.

■■■

NSCW AWARD WINNERS

The 1996 President's Award
Michael Anderson

The 1996 Patrick Crean Award
SAFD Treasurer and NSCW Coordinator
Bill Lengfelder

■■■

ACTOR/COMBATANT WORKSHOP

Best Female Actor/Combatant
Wendy Vander Velde

Best Male Actor/Combatant
Clay Van Sickle

Best Scene
"Hamlet"
Lance Brannon and Stephen Buck

■■■

ADVANCED ACTOR/COMBATANT WORKSHOP

Best Female Actor/Combatant
Nichole Calleder

Best Male Actor/Combatant
Paul Molnar

Best Scene
"Macbeth"
DC Wright and Tracy Wood

BY
LINDA
CARLYLE
MCCOLLUM

A VISIT TO THE WORLD STAGE FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS IN LISBON, PORTUGAL

From August 26 to September 2, I attended the Congress of the Academie d'Armes Internationale and the World Stage Fencing Championships in Lisbon, Portugal. This week-long international conference was hosted by the Academia de Armas de Portugal, the Portuguese national fencing master's academy. Representatives from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Great Britain, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States attended.



Top: Oscar Kolombatovich lecturing on the evolution of the sword.

Bottom: Maestro Foucteau of France teaching broadsword and sword and shield.



The Academie d'Armes Internationale is the world governing body of professional fencing teachers in both the competitive and artistic fields. The American member of the International Academy is the United States Fencing Coaches Association. The USFCA was represented in Lisbon by Michel Sebastiani, the fencing coach of Princeton University, and myself.

The International Congress was held at the Ginasio Clube de Portugal. The first two days dealt with Pedagogical Aspects of Sports Fencing followed by two days of meetings of the International Fencing Academy (AAI). The following three days were devoted to Artistic Fencing concluding with the World Stage Fencing Championship.

Artistic Fencing

Artistic Fencing's primary purpose is to popularize fencing by performing historical reenactments. The emphasis seems to be on historical accuracy, but an "historical accuracy" from a very French point of view. "Escrime Spectaculars" have been held annually in France and an International Championship is held biennially.

Maestro Pradelle of France taught rapier and dagger and Maestro Foucteau of France and the President of the International Academy taught baton, broadsword (using batons), sword and shield, and single rapier during the three day workshop. All classes were taught in French.

Footwork and distance

Footwork was surprising linear for rapier and dagger play. There were still passes, and ducking cuts, but the actions were linear rather than frontal. The foot work of the rapier "salutes" also reflected this. Combatants began in third position and finished with the heel of the left foot next to the toe of the right foot looking very much like a closed salute as depicted in the Angelo prints.

Distance was much closer than usual in America, as was true of England as well. Parries in rapier play were made with the elbow in contact with the body for support against the attack. This brought the opponent's blade in close to the body and, while this may be an authentic move, it does not read well for the audience which is trying to follow the logic of the fight visually.

Flamboyant moves such as spins, repetitious blade smashing and cross parries, were taught for their theatrical effect rather than for authenticity. (Maestro Oscar Kolombatovich, who lectured on the evolution of the sword and on fight choreography at the conference offered one of his swords to the first person who could find a historical fencing manuscript showing a parry using a crossed rapier and dagger.)

Baton work

The baton was quite different from the quarterstaff as taught in the United States. While there were some short form maneuvers, the Grand Baton is handled from one end and slung around like swinging a two handed broadsword.

The Medieval class actually used the grand baton to simulate the two handed sword and a shorter baton was used for the hand-and-a-half or bastard sword. Shields had been specially made for the medieval workshop and consisted of strips of pine wood framed in metal and riveted. Two bands crossed the shield on the inside as well as hand loops and padding for the arm. These shields weighed about 12 pounds. The armbands were adjusted to balance the weight of the shields.

The World Championship in Stage Fencing

Twelve teams competed in the World Championship in Stage Fencing with choreography by Foucteau, Bravo, Russo, Roquel Wackermann and Pradelle. Most of the scenes were mimed with musical accompaniment enhancing the theatricality of the event. A few of the scenes used dialogue and each scene ended with a salute to the audience. There was no attempt to integrate a scene from a play, but to simply present a fight.

The show began with the sounds of a blacksmith hammering on his anvil. The curtain opened to reveal a knight in mail. As the knight moved upstage, a series of curtains opened, revealing a tableau of each of the groups entered in the competition.

Those entering the competition paid a fee and entered as either a pair or group. The scenes were theatrically lit and had a semblance of a set, i.e., window, closet, table, specifically arranged for each scene. Teams from France, Japan, Portugal, Sweden, and Tasmania were entered in the competition.

Scenes that stood out

Three scenes stood out for their uniqueness and cleverness. The first was a duel between a statue that had come to life and a wounded duelist showing a strong contrast in

"The show began with the sounds of a blacksmith hammering on his anvil. The curtain opened to reveal a knight in mail. As the knight moved upstage, a series of curtains opened, revealing a tableau of each of the groups"



Top: Jorge, from the Portuguese Academy demonstrates sword (baton) and shield.

Bottom: Sergio and Alana, members of the Portuguese Academy, working out with rapier and dagger.



the style of movement between the incapacitated and frantic human and the stiffly impenetrable stone statue.

Another clever scene began with what appeared to be an empty picture frame but became a mirror with the two combatants mirroring each others moves in opposition. When the mirror transformed itself with fire and smoke, the two duelists fought downstage and ended by eventually escaping back into the world of the mirror.

“There was a real sense of excitement and danger in the winning scene, even though the theatre management would not allow combatants to use torches as originally choreographed.”

The winning scene

The winning scene, done to contemporary music, was grand and double baton. There was a real sense of excitement and danger in the winning scene even though the theatre management would not allow the combatants to use torches as originally choreographed.

The group fights lacked focus and were surprisingly slow paced with no real sense of danger. The kills in the Bushido piece were made parallel to the audience and well out of distance. There was no concern with masking a kill in the performances and the audience seemed to accept this convention.

Authenticity without illusion

While depicting authenticity of historical technique, the scenes missed the logic of strategy and any attempt to create a theatrical illusion. The combatants wore elaborate costumes from the period but moved like twentieth century men and women. (This might have been because they were primarily fencers and not actors.)

With all the talk of authenticity, it was surprising to see cup hilt rapiers on the musketeers, or the left hand raised above the head during a rapier fight, or linear 18th century foot work being used with 16th century rapier and dagger.

The fact that some of the adjudicators for the event were also participating choreographers who had entered the competition

seemed puzzling to some of us but accepted without question by those in attendance.

A spectacular evening

This Stage Fencing Championship was a spectacular evening and great fun for all. The Portuguese Academy and the city of Lisbon honored all representatives with the Plaque of the City of Lisbon and feted the conference at a medieval banquet in the 14th century Castle of St. Jorge that stood on the highest hill in Lisbon. The Portuguese Academy knows how to put on a first class conference!

■

BY
LINDA
CARLYLE
MCCOLLUM

THE 1996 PATRICK CREAN WORKSHOP AND ROAST WAS HELD IN CANAD'S WINE-GROWING COUNTRY

for three days during the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Put together by Brad Waller and the Globe Fighters Guild for the fifth consecutive year, representatives from the American, Canadian, British and Nordic Societies were present both as teachers and as participants.

“On the last day Paddy was ‘roasted’ in the evening by his friends and colleagues. Actors, lady friends, theatre managers, fight masters, and students from the various societies were present for the roast...”

Patrick Crean, as Rudyard Kipling, in his one-man show *The Sun Never Sets*.



Teachers included Drew Fracher, Erik Fredricksen, Brad Waller, Payson Burt, Jonathan Howell, Richard Ryan, Steve Whilsher, J.P. Fornier, Jean-Francois Gagnon, Bob Seale, Gary Foo, John Brogan and Pepe Ostensson.

Rotating from one workshop to another

The participants divided into three groups and rotated through the day from one workshop session to another with each session being offered three times. Evenings provided a variety of workshops which the participants selected according to their personal preference.

The emphasis of the workshops

was on putting the acting into the fight, not just learning swordplay technique. This was clearly seen with Erik Fredricksen and Pepe Ostensson's mask workshop.

Through the mask, workshop students explored their own physicality and the qualities that were communicated through use of their bodies. For example, earth, wind, fire and water were discovered to be centered, respectively, in the feet/legs, chest, abdomen and hips. These qualities were then applied to their swordwork by putting these qualities into their character as they practiced a fencing phrase.

Talking through the fight

The same kind of “talking through the intention of the fight” was also seen in Drew Fracher and Richard Ryan's work. The combatants' response to the various moves of the fencing phrase were walked through as a group to understand the motivation, intention and goal of each move.

Steve Whilsher used a similar approach in analyzing the moves and the reasoning behind the action as he worked with the participants on street fighting.

And great fun was to be had by all with Bob Seale who, in full 1812 regalia, taught battalion work in the hot sun. Put a costume on Bob and he really gets into character and the participants responded accordingly. And, surprise of surprise, some of the participants saw what they had learned actually used on stage in the Shaw Festival's production of *The Devil's Disciple*.

Jean-Francois Gagnon, with Genivere, taught two sessions on sword dancing. Sword and buckler were used and we all got our feet a little tangled. It was nice to be able to attend a workshop where, even though the emphasis is on swordplay, there is more being offered than just sword technique and a test to follow.

Roasting Paddy

On the last day Paddy was “roasted” in the evening by his friends and colleagues. Actors, lady friends, theatre managers, fight masters and students from the various societies were present for the roast which was held at the Royal George Theatre, a theatre where Paddy performed his one-man show on Rudyard Kipling, *The Sun Never Sets*, in the mid 80's.

Lots of stories were told, some very funny and even a little embarrassing and others very moving. Paddy held up well through the entire evening and, as ever, was gracious.

Back in 1981, after the workshop at the University of Michigan, Erik Fredricksen commented on how Paddy was a "living example of positive Ki." Paddy's spirit and kindness demonstrates more aptly than any words how petty and unimportant national "allegiances" really are in the fight business.

"Paddy's spirit and kindness demonstrates more aptly than any words how petty and unimportant national 'allegiances' really are in the fight business."

The Patrick Crean Workshop

It was Brad Waller who brought together the three stage combat societies at a workshop in Washington in 1993, making it the first truly international meeting of the three organizations. Fight Directors Canada have continued the tradition by including Fight Masters and Certified Teachers from the British and American Societies to teach at their National Workshop. There is such a sense of sharing at these workshops, in keeping with the personality of Paddy Crean himself who has always been so open and sharing with his resources and himself.

To see the look on people's faces as they talked to Paddy who is truly a "living legend" was absolutely joyous. He is so accessible, so humble, yet so professional. A shining example for all of us. Thanks Paddy, for making us all look so good!

■■■

A MINI BIO OF PATRICK CREAN

For members of the SAFD who who aren't familiar with Patrick Crean "the Dean of Stage Combat," here's a mini-biography.

■ Off to Ceylon

In July 1930, 19-year-old Patrick Crean was off to Ceylon to be apprenticed to a tea planter. His family hoped that, as he learned the tea trade, he would forget about the theatre. But fate took a hand when a shipboard romance involved Patrick with a young woman who was an accomplished fencer. Along with the young lady, Paddy became enamored of swordplay.

The onset of the Depression devastated the tea trade and young Crean was advised to go home. Back in London, Patrick decided to pursue a career in the theatre.

■ Casanova

Paddy's first job was in an extravaganza called *Casanova*; he played the gondolier in Scene 1, the tenth Austrian officer in Scene 4, tenth Russian officer in Scene 4, and one of men at the masquerade ball in Scene 7. He was also hired as fencing instructor for the production.

■ Fight Director

Two years later, Patrick was hired on with the Northampton Repertory Company to replace a young man who had landed a Hollywood contract. The young actor that Crean replaced was Errol Flynn. Their paths would cross again.

Patrick continued to act and arrange fights for such theatrical stars as Trevor Howard, Paul Scofield, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Michael Redgrave, & Alec Guinness. He opened his own fencing school in London.

■ Errol Flynn

Warner Brothers called Patrick about being the fight director for an upcoming film, *The Master of Ballantrae*. The star was Errol Flynn. Of Flynn, Paddy has said, "If anyone had panache, he did — and to spare." They did three films together. One of Paddy's prized positions are a sword engraved by Flynn and a photo inscribed, "Hello, Pat! Thanks a helluva lot, pal, for making me look good. Errol Flynn."

■ Stratford

In 1962, Patrick traveled to Stratford, Canada to stage fights for Christopher Plummer in *Macbeth*. "I missed England so much I didn't even set my watch to Canadian time." In time, however, he became a Canadian citizen. Paddy has trained countless students, including SAFD Fight Masters Erik Fredricksen & J. Allen Suddeth. Stage fighters everywhere owe Patrick Crean an enormous debt.

BY
LINDA
CARLYLE
MCCOLLUM

THE CANADIAN ROCKIES WAS THE SPECTACULAR SETTING FOR THE 1996 CANADIAN NATIONALS

sponsored by Fight Directors Canada at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Thirty-eight students took part in the two week workshop which was taught by Robert Seale, Fight Master and President of FDC, J.P. Fournier, Fight Master and Vice President, Steve Whilsher of the Society of British Fight Directors, Brad Waller and Payson Burt of the Society of American Fight Directors, and Canadian Fight Directors Jean Francois Gagnon, John Nelles, Simon Fon, and Gary Foo.

The Canadians are doing some very exciting work and FDC training has expanded into areas that other societies might want to consider. All participants received CPR training. Basic gun safety was offered, giving many participants their first exposure to the handling and firing of a fire-arm.

command of these two weapons in less than two weeks.

Everyone started with the martial arts on the first day of the two week workshop and this seemed to help to focus and center the students for their work with other weapons and techniques. And with all the emphasis on martial arts in film and television, this new addition certainly gives Canadian Actor/Combatants needed skills for today's market.

Test partners

Partners for the skills tests are selected at random and each student has a different partner for each weapon. Just as it is in the real business of theatre, one never knows the size, gender, or personality of whom one will be cast opposite to fight. This also eliminates trying to come up with a rational scene for fighting with four weapons.

Not only does the student have four individuals to work with (up to seven at the advanced level) but he is also allowed to arrange his own fights incorporating the mandatory moves of the skills test and the fight phrases/sequences the instructor has choreographed for the class. This allows the student to organically work the moves of the fight into the scenario and adapt it to his own character and physicality.

During the rehearsal process the Fight Directors look at the scenes, work with the actor/combatants and make helpful suggestions to improve their work.

Putting together 83 scenes

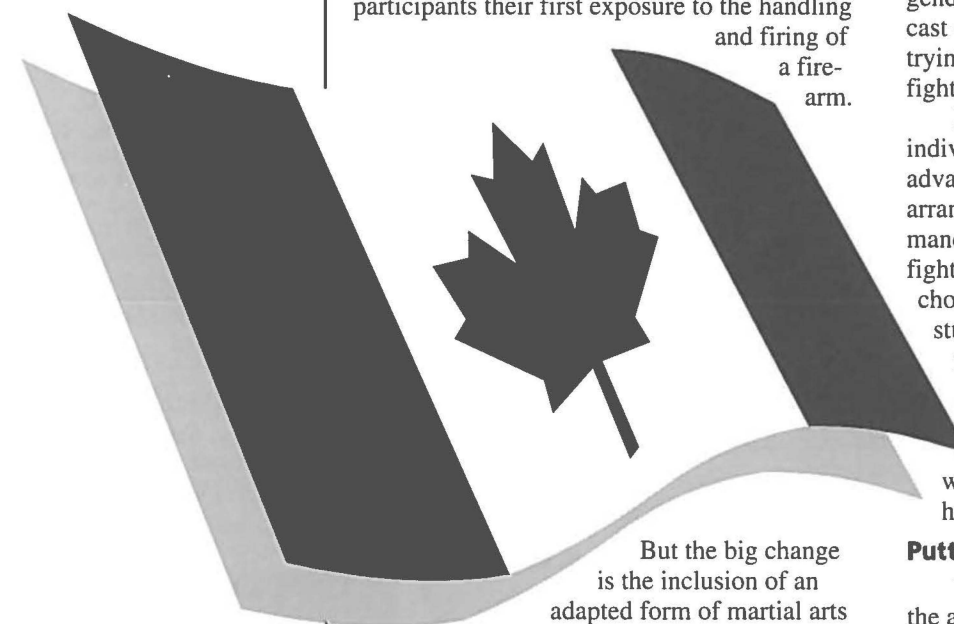
While this approach worked quite well at the advanced level, some of the beginning students seemed overwhelmed by the prospect of working with and learning distance, trust, timing, lines and the original fight with four separate individuals. (Not to mention that this involved the evaluation of 83 scenes by the Fight Director Adjudicators.) Part of this is dependent upon the individual's discipline and focus, which not all participants have to the same degree.

The Actor/Combatants had to establish their character and the cause of their fight, and show emotional commitment in a realistic manner be it comedic or dramatic. Sequencing of the moves reflected the candidates' grasp of

But the big change is the inclusion of an adapted form of martial arts including a composite of Filipino stick fighting that is now part of the mandatory requirements for the FDC Actor/Combatant.

FDC Actor/Combatant requirements

The minimum requirements for the FDC Actor/Combatant are now unarmed, martial arts, generic sword (a form of single rapier using a sabre) and quarterstaff. Not until the advanced level, when the student has developed more fluidity in movement and physicality in their fight work, is the student trained in rapier and dagger and broadsword, a choice that certainly proved itself when one saw how quickly the advanced student had



“One fight used a mop and industrial pail to ward off an assailant, who was using a jar of peanut butter to aggravate an allergic reaction.”

the scenic matter. This approach, which is very physical and actor-based, manifested itself well in a two-woman unarmed fight where all the mandatory moves were executed but the choices outside the mandatory moves were relevant to the females' physicality and character. Another scene involving domestic violence between young couple showed intensity, vocalization and believability that was uncomfortably real.

At the advanced level, the students do an elective or found weapon. One fight used a mop and industrial pail to ward off an assailant who was using a jar of peanut butter to aggravate an allergic reaction. Another involved a squabble on the ice between a hockey player and a figure skater and used a hockey stick and the goal net. And one of the most bizarre scenarios involved a whip, handcuffs and a piece of paper as the weapons in a three person fight. Just think of all the possibilities!

FDC also requires a written exam on the terminology and concepts covered in the classes so that the actor/combatant demonstrates in writing his understanding of the subject matter.

Testing for Fight Director

The four candidates being considered for Fight Director were given specific choreography assignments for each weapon and were required to present the fight within twenty-four hours using volunteers from the advanced and beginning classes.

Scenes were evaluated and critiqued by the FDC teachers. For example, the rapier and dagger fight was set in a Brazilian marketplace in 1580s and required three people on stage and a double kill. The smallsword fight was set in Paris in 1794 and was an encounter between a French officer and a spy.

The variety of scenarios and choreography the four very talented candidates for Fight Director created, taught, coached, and finished

in such a short period of time was absolutely amazing. Some of this must be credited to the fine technique and acting ability of actor/combatants that were randomly chosen to work with them on their own time.

Paddy Crean Award winner Raul Tome did an incredibly believable portrayal of a blind man in the smallsword fight choreographed by Tim Klotz entitled “Waiting for Old Friends.” Another smallsword fight choreographed by Peter Hurley was performed in French by Carrie Thiel and Sandy MacMaster and included a very unusual kill on the return of a sword.

The Fight Director candidates were very supportive of one another. There didn't seem to be a competitive edge between them. When questions of scenic or choreographic choices were questioned, the candidate assumed the total responsibility of the choices without making excuses for the outcome or passing blame. This positive attitude was seen throughout the Canadian Nationals.

Crossovers between organizations

Ever since Brad Waller encouraged an exchange of teachers from the SBFD and FDC at the Paddy Crean Workshop five years ago (1991), there has been an increase in cross germination of ideas between the three organizations. It was really exciting to see instructors from the three organizations sharing their techniques and styles with other teachers as well as the students. And, outside of class, there was a free and open exchange of information and historical sources.

Next year's workshop will either be in Toronto or the Banff Centre again. You might want to make the trip to Canada and experience some of the innovative things our cousin is initiating.

■ ■ ■

The CT/FM Retreat saw 22 fighters sharing their knowledge.

BY JEFF A.R. JONES

#1: Martial arts are not strictly eastern in origin. By seizing a leg, Brad Waller prepares to take Payson Burt to the ground using techniques from 15th and 16th century European manuals.

#2: Morozzo's Presa Seconda from the Opera Nova.

#3: Payson Burt thwarts left to remove his body from the danger of Lewis Shaw's blade. Payson's system of footwork defines and increases the vocabulary of footwork.

#4: Morozzo's Presa Quarta or fourth press.

Share the Violence...

THIS YEAR, LAS VEGAS WAS HOST TO A NEW level of training in the world of stage combat. For the first time, all certified teachers and fight masters were invited to attend an annual CT/FM Retreat. All were also offered the opportunity to choose any topic and teach a class on it. The result of this open invitation was three days of classes as varied as the individuals teaching them.

“For the first time ever, we were able to get together from all over the country, purely for the good of the organization in a fun, relaxed, informal way without any kind of pressure or testing to distract us from our goal: the sharing of information,” stated Fight Master Drew Fracher. Each person had been working on specific areas within the art form and finally got a chance to share the details they had learned about particular interests.

PAYSON'S PACES

Teacher Payson Burt of Philadelphia began by offering his studies on footwork, teaching “Payson's Paces,” a re-examination of footwork systems to provide a greater vocabulary with respect to footwork.

With Payson's system, all footwork is given a definition; not just advance, retreat, pass, volte. Providing this kind of vocabulary gives the fight director more conscious choices to make choreography interesting and

teachable. Payson originated the system to help teach beginners, especially when they need to keep distance while traveling in a circle.

“It gives the basic student a clear visualization of how to maintain distance in the circle, and I wanted to share that with my fellow teachers,” said Payson.

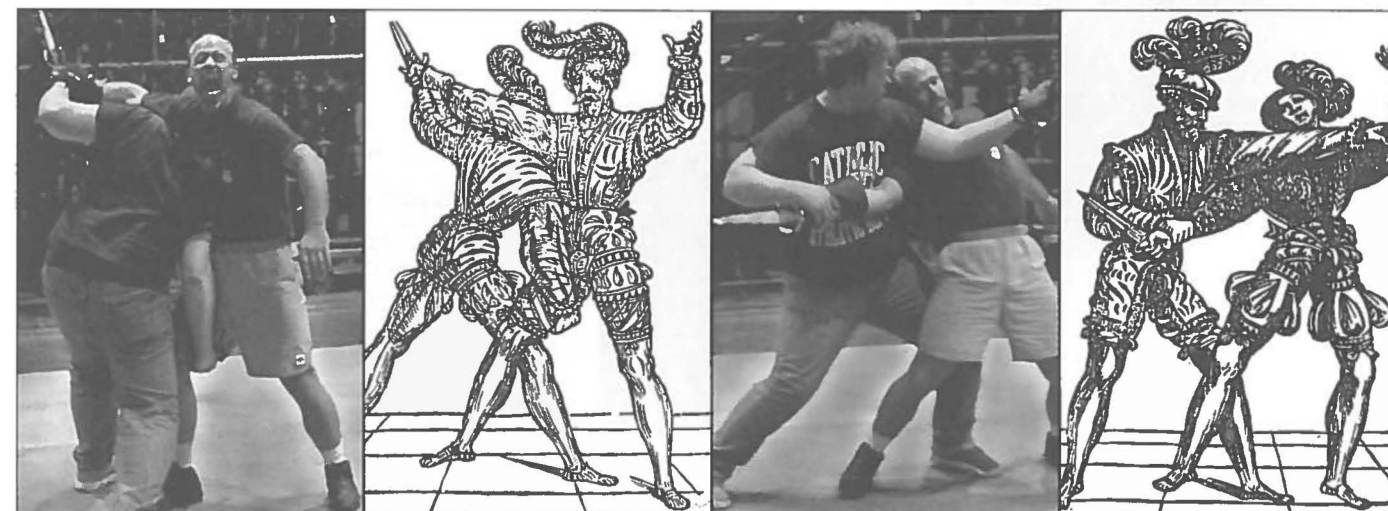
HIDING THE KNAP

Payson also taught “Hiding the Knap” with the assistance of Certified Teacher Lewis Shaw from Baltimore. Since a wonderful fight can be ruined by a visible knap, Payson and Lewis demonstrated ways to hide the knap, sometimes in full view of the audience. He also covered unarmed in the round, showing ways to cover the punch and mask the knap even when surrounded by audience.

Payson illustrated the old magician's premise of misdirection combined with the movement/acting skill of energizing the hands at the proper place and time to complete the illusion. And, in the unarmed work the Payson demonstrated, not even the experience of the participants could help them see the knaps.

GRIPS, SEIZURES AND DISARMS

Unarmed work in an historical context was part of Washington D.C. Certified Teacher Brad Waller's class on “Grips, Seizures, and Disarms” which drew from texts like Morozzo's *Opera Nova* and Meyer's *Manual*

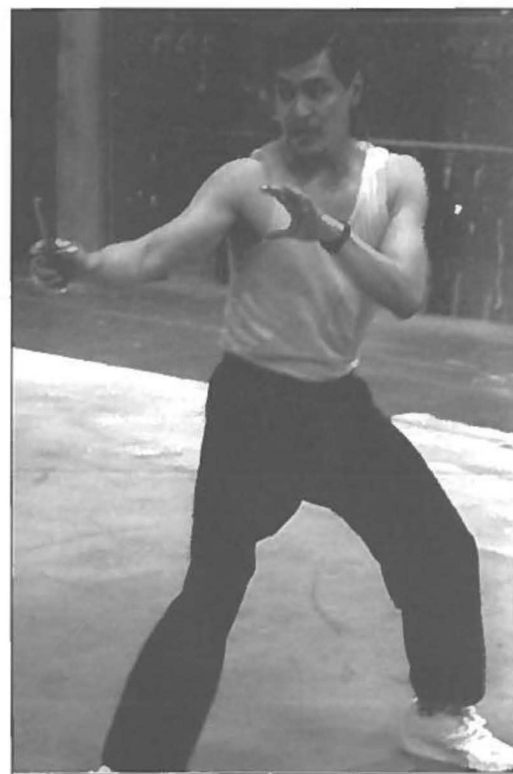




Payson Burt thwarts left on the 90° to remove his body from the danger of Lewis Shaw's blade. Payson's system of footwork defines and increases the vocabulary of footwork.

to show Renaissance martial arts. "I'm not trying to recreate history; that would be silly. But the old techniques are of real use to us; each weapon had its own distinct personality and their systems were highly sophisticated," observed Brad.

The session covered disarming an opponent's dagger, blocking and controlling punches, and taking one's opponent to the ground. This led into a portion on rapier and gauntlet.



Right: Michael Chin demonstrates centuries-old techniques of Shaolin knife fighting as he leads the group through a violent and vigorous kata.

Colleen Kelly and Richard Lane explore smallsword in eighteenth century attire; long coats and high heels significantly enhance the sense of style.



When the left hand is covered by a chain mail gauntlet, the combatant's use of the left hand is not confined to blocking thrusts. The fighter may also take the offense by seizing the opponent's blade and controlling it while attacking. Making parries with a caught blade was demonstrated as well. With support from period manuals, Brad displayed martial arts as they were employed in Renaissance Europe.

SHAOLIN KUNG FU

Renaissance martial arts were balanced by even older martial arts as Michael Chin, a Certified Teacher based in New York taught "Shaolin Kung Fu Kicks and Dagger Fighting."

Included in the session was a Shaolin dagger fighting form that was so popular it was used during the retreat as a part of the daily warm up. Each form began with a salute.

"The right fist is for hardness and strength; the left open hand is for softness and knowledge; these come together to make a whole, centered person," explained Michael, who soon had everyone jumping, spinning, and kicking with various kicking techniques from Shaolin Kung Fu. By the end of class, the group was whipping around to kick the head of someone behind them.

CENTER, FOCUS, AND RELAXATION

Not all full body work was so vigorous. Center, focus, and relaxation was key to "Feldenkrais Techniques" by Certified Teacher Bob MacDougal. Based in Seattle, Bob teaches Feldenkrais in addition to stunt work and stage combat. Moshe Feldenkrais states that through his techniques, "the details of the self or the surroundings can be better sensed; we become aware of what we are doing and not what we say or think we are doing."

This increased awareness is a definite aid to the movement performer. One exercise involved lying on the floor and focusing movement in a small portion of the back. Lessons take place in the lying position to facilitate the breakdown of muscular patterns.

The session merely touched on the concepts and techniques of Feldenkrais and their application to stage combatants, but gave participants the chance to experience some of the effects of a Feldenkrais lesson.

COSTUMES AND COMBAT

Florida Certified Teacher Jeff A.R. Jones and Kentucky Fight Master Drew Fracher also dealt with physical experience in "Costumes and Combat."

After a brief study of historical fashion, participants got to explore a phrase while wearing different period clothes. Renaissance rapier and dagger fights were performed with combatants costumed in doublets with tie-in sleeves, flat shoes, and extremely full

pumpkin breeches. Restoration smallsword duelists were festooned in long fancy coats, breeches, waistcoats, high heels, and loads of neck and cuff lace.

"You always teach best from personal experience," said Jeff. "This group now has another image to use to get students to understand the differences in the period styles. They can now say, 'I've fought smallsword in high heels — it changes your center.'"

GLISSADES AND YIELDING PARRIES

Swordplay was the base for Chicago Fight Master David Woolley's "Glissades and Yielding Parries," in which he led participants through vast and complex variations of glissades into yielding parries.

The lesson began simply, working on the specific dynamic of the glissade/yield parry. This was then expanded to incorporate long runs, spins for one partner, and back falls for the defender. Eventually, both partners were spinning while the blades remained in contact and one charged the other across the stage.

As Woolley pointed out during the session, "Obviously, this sort of work isn't right for every situation, but it works really well when you're doing that show that need flash and fun."

ROUND ROBIN RAPIERS

Flash and fun was in abundance in "Round Robin Rapiers," led by Brian Byrnes, a certified teacher based in Houston. This drill allowed everyone to use a case of rapiers to fight off four opponents at once. Rapid swaps allowed everyone to fight with everyone else.

"It works on a 360° peripheral awareness principle while maintaining multiple focus and flow," explained Brian. "But it was really just a chance to play with each other at a very advanced level."

SCANSION AND THE HAY

Not all events involved slinging steel or flying fists. Virginia CT Colleen Kelly's first session, "Scansion and the Hay," dealt with two topics. The first was how to use scansion to explore choreographic opportunities in Shakespeare. By examining the intended rhythm of the line, one can make choices about opening moves of fights that either support or intentionally break iambic pentameter.

The remaining time was spent learning "the Hay," a sword-based Morris Dance that Mercutio mentions in reference to Tybalt in the line, "Ah, the immortal passado! The punto reverso! The hay!"

What do you get when fourteen certified teachers, four fight masters, four journey-people, and an on-site coordinator leap into the air waving sticks and toilet paper around their heads, shouting in unison? Answer: the Hay!

WHAT WORKS?

Colleen's other session led a round table discussion of "What Works?" in which everyone shared their problems, their solutions, and their successes in both academic and professional environments.

"I think talking about the daily problems we have and their solutions is probably one of the most useful things we've ever done."

— Drew Fracher

Discussion topics included (but were of course not limited to) student attentiveness, attendance, minimum student age, maximum student age, dealing with directors, and dealing with unions. Drew Fracher responded, "I think talking about the daily problems we have and their solutions is probably one of the most useful things we've ever done."

Not all discussions were geared toward teaching and working; some dealt with SAFD business. The Certified Teachers present held three nights of meetings to discuss some concerns to be presented to the SAFD officers.

Top: David Woolley glissades into Brian Byrnes' yield with some flashy footwork, demonstrating one of the many extremes that can be taken while keeping swords in contact.



Below: Cowardly crows (Payson Burt, Chris Oakler, Jeff A.R. Jones, Colleen Kelly) cleverly cower before the rambunctious robin's (Dexter Fidler) ready rapier in "Round Robin Rapiers."



CT's discussed the qualifications for the new Fight Director status and recommended more stringent criteria. They proposed apprenticeship programs for teacher-track students and considered the ramifications of adding new levels of Actor/Combatant status.

New SAFD committees were discussed and created, namely a Health and Safety Committee responsible for contacting practitioners of sports medicine, chiropractic, fitness training and other health fields to examine the short- and long-term physical effects of our techniques.

Everyone was then invited to an open officer meeting where these topics were discussed along with other topics affecting the SAFD, its members, and its future.

At the head of this list was the proposed reorganization of the Society and the new bylaws, which were discussed (and continue to be discussed) in great detail.

"It was a remarkable opportunity for growth at a very advanced level, unlike anything I've encountered before."

—Mark "Rat" Guinn

All in all, this event was considered invaluable by those who attended. CT Mark "Rat" Guinn of Louisiana said, "Wow." He elaborated, "It was a remarkable opportunity for growth at a very advanced level, unlike anything I've encountered before."

Certified Teacher Gregory Hoffman called it "one of the more humbling and enlightening experiences I've had in a long time. It should happen every year." The enjoyment of sharing knowledge with respected colleagues was rivaled only by the excitement of terrorizing Vegas with close friends.

The first annual Share the Violence Retreat was a definite success. A cheer goes out for its annual continuance.

■ ■ ■

Jeff A.R. Jones is a certified teacher based in Florida.

Colleen Kelly (left) conducts SAFD President Drew Fracher and friends take part in The Hay, a raucous sword dance mentioned by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*.

A group gets off the ground with the Hay. This period Morris Dance was performed with small swords festooned with long, brightly colored ribbons; dancers would strike swords while jumping into the air, and shouting "Hay!"



What makes for a good partner? Asking further questions might help to answer the first question.

BY
BRIAN
BYRNES
&
RICKI G.
RAVITTS

The Partnering Paradigm

"SAFETY AND DRAMATIC EFFECT" HAVE LONG been held as the top tenets of stage fighting. The path to reach these goals traditionally follows the acquisition of both solid technical skills and exciting acting abilities.

Unlike a Shakespearean monologue or an operatic aria, however, staged fights require a third very important factor which can bind together the technique, the acting, as well as you and your fellow performer. This essential third element is termed "partnering".

THE PURSUIT OF GOOD PARTNERING

The pursuit of good partnering has rewards even beyond the pleasant working atmosphere it helps to create. Striving to be a good partner is the link that secures your shared acting abilities and your technical skills. Good partnering can actually enhance these skills and make them more easily attainable.

Whether the activity is tennis or chess, bridge or broadsword and shield, virtually everyone likes to work with those at or just above one's own perceived skill level. Yet we have observed that in stage violence "technical skill" and "acting ability" often count for naught unless they reside in a good partner.

When two good partners work together, the excellence of the pair can exceed the skill level of either individual. Conversely, bad partnering can yield not just an ineffective fight scene but a potentially dangerous one as well.

These observations led us to ask ourselves:

- What makes a good partner?
 - How does one know if he/she is a good partner?
 - How does one become a better partner?
- Following are some thoughts to consider.

A GOOD PARTNER

- Projects enthusiasm for the work
- Shows an appreciation for his/her partner's work, thereby enhancing confidence and performance
- Works to improve upon and expand his/her techniques

- Has an awareness of his/her partner (both in physical and acting relationship to oneself)

- Has an awareness of the fight as part of a larger stage picture (again incorporating both physical stage awareness and how the fight scene supports the play as a whole)

WHAT KIND OF PARTNER ARE YOU?

- Do you look forward to working the fight, or is it a chore?

- Do you let your partner know that you respect his/her work?

- Do you respect his/her work?

- Do you assume you are the superior fighter?

- Do you criticize, direct or correct your partner either verbally or through body language or your working attitude?

- When something goes wrong, do you automatically assume your partner is at fault? (or the fight director, or the stage manager, etc.)
- Is your focus inner-directed (concerned first with your own intentions, techniques, speed), or outer-directed (concerned with the fight as a whole, trying to balance individual needs, abilities with the requirements of scene and safety)?

One motto to keep in mind is: The quickest way to learn something, is to learn it slowly. Strive toward that partnering paradigm and you will enhance your learning and your enjoyment by including others in your partnering process.

■■■

Brian Byrnes is a certified teacher based in Houston.
Ricki G. Ravitts is a certified teacher based in New York.

“If you truly are the “superior partner”... try to inspire and support your partner, recognizing all the good fighters who did and do the same for you..”

- Does your frustration with your own or your partner's work bring rehearsal to a halt?
- When you make a mistake, is there usually a good explanation for it?
- When your partner makes a mistake, is it yet another example of his/her inferior fight skills?

TOWARD BETTER PARTNERING

As with many artistic pursuits, certain elements of partnering are gifts given to the fortunate, similar to the ability to lead or follow when dancing. Nonetheless, many of the traits of good partnering can be learned: both fight skills and people skills.

Patience is indeed a virtue — patience with yourself and with your partner. If you truly are the “superior fighter,” congratulations on your good

work; now try to inspire and support your partner, recognizing all the good fighters who did and do the same for you.

THE WORK OF MANY YEARS

We live in an era of immediate gratification, but swordplay and stage fighting should not be considered as such. Excellence in stage fighting is the work of many years, through all of which the learning should continue.



The task of creating fights for a physically challenged actor open up new horizons for all involved in this production of *Zastrozzi*.

BY
BILL

The Actor's Physique: A Cauldron of the Psyche

The Cabala apportions the human breath into six principal arcana, the first of which, called the Great Arcanum, is that of creation....I have had the idea of employing this knowledge of the kinds of breathing not only in the actor's work, but in the actor's preparation for his craft. For if knowledge of breathing makes clear the soul's color, it can with all the more reason stimulate the soul and encourage its blossoming.

— Antonin Artaud

All his (Artaud's) divisions of breathing are just misinterpretations of oriental texts. He wasn't entirely himself.

— Jerczy Gratoski

Don't worry about whom we're gonna cast in that role. If I can see in his eyes he's been touched by God, don't worry, he'll be able to learn any trick we need.

— Lengfelder

THE FIRST TWO QUOTES I READ AS A YOUNG student of theater, and began a long process of research and theoretical inquiry into which man was right, Artaud or Gratoski. I pushed my way through the writings of Gershon Scholem under the guidance of Rabbi Solon Chervitz (who served as head of my graduate committee).

I had by this point gotten black belts in Kuntaw, Shito-ryu, Shorin-ryu, Kobujitsu; studied T'ai Chi Ch'uan, hatha yoga, Corporal Mime, Hawkins Dance Technique (untrademarked!), buck and wing, circus skills (trapeze, stilts, juggling), and a host of other things that make movement specialists so smug about all the buzz words that make up our resume and training.

training that followed a paradigm about the flow of energy. I taught this method of movement on the college level, and was asked to direct a show.

In 1989, I directed a production of *K2* at the university black box, experimenting with a type of movement “laboratory experience” preceding the actual “directing” of the piece. The production was a huge success — as huge as it gets in a university theater hidden deep within the cornfields of Northern Illinois. Based on the success of this production — attributed by the actors largely to the “lab” — I continued my study and my refining a theory of movement for actor training.

PREPARING FOR ZASTROZZI

In 1994, I was lucky enough to get to repeat my experiment in lab training for the actor, but this time with a young, successful, up-and-coming professional company called the Kitchen Dog Theater. Over the course of thirteen weeks, I led two Stanislavsky-based Equity actors through a daily regiment of physical exercises based on the work I had done with university actors.

We were preparing to do Walker's *Zastrozzi*. I had a fine young graduate student/intern on the lab as well. Functionally, I had three fine mythical physical “types” in three of the four male roles; a Hercules Farnese, an Apollo, and a Hermes. I had yet to cast the role of Verezzi, but I made the boast quoted at the start of this article to the three actors cast during one of our training sessions, “The actor must look like he's been touched by God...” ...and he'd have to hold up his end in a swordfight with our Hercules ...and the fighting was one of the main components of the lab sessions. We intended to have spectacular fight sequences.

After making the aforementioned boast, I actually saw the actor with the right look in his eyes... the essence of Verezzi. As excited as I was to actually find this actor, imagine my surprise to see that actor was also in a wheelchair!

Rene Moreno is an actor who had a very successful acting career going when a fall forced him to be in a wheelchair. In many

“As excited as I was to actually find this actor, imagine my surprise to see that actor was also in a wheelchair.”

In graduate school, I created a theoretical matrix or system of movement for actor

ways, he was the seasoned pro who was hired out of New York (like a "hired gun") to come in, rehearse a show in three weeks, and put it up in a professional theater. Our lab had the investment of people who were training together over the course of a summer to prepare to rehearse a show.

CHALLENGES FOR THE MOVEMENT SPECIALIST

Rene willingly joined the training and performed the role. Rene challenged me as, a movement specialist in a very interesting way. For all of my movement skill, Rene was (and is) what I am not: a very fine actor. He challenged many of my movement "theories." And, while he served as a complete anomaly to my world of movement, he confirmed something we shared: there exists a spiritual component to theater and acting in particular that is so palpable as to move an actor through the physical problems of a fight scene... and to move an audience.

"Combat brought ... the notion that a hidden force, the warrior's own spirit, could ... give him victory."

My study in graduate school led me to notice many cross-cultural similarities to things that Artaud had pondered. A male/female, yin/yang, ida/pingala, right brain/left brain phenomenon presented itself. I began to compare things like the Chinese notion of "chin, chi, and shen" to notions like "ru'ah, nefesh, neshemah." I noticed the similarities between chakras of yoga and the elements of the Corporal Mime Scale.

THE "STIMULATION AND BLOSSOMING OF THE SOUL"

I sought to synthesize these many ideas and their expression in movement to infuse the lab with the intent of Artaud and expressly for theatrical expression. So that, at the end, chakras were not something "other worldly" but a power source to empower the corporal mime scale. The objective was to create a movement technique whose specificity on stage was linked to the "stimulation and blossoming of the soul."

My method was to have the actors train together in synergistically-paired skills: Kundalini, chakra meditation, and corporal mime; T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Tiger, Crane, and Mantix Wu Shu; T'ui Sh'uo (sensitive hands) and spotting on weight training; ta lu and the bladework which involved T'ai Chi blade, Tiger blade, Kenjutsu, Kali, rapier and dagger.

The weight training days were broken into push days and pull days, emphasizing the

yin/yang within the performer's own body strengths. T'ai Chi Ch'uan was treated as a movement "neutral" as the yin and yang form the movement, hence, T'ai Chi... Ch'uan as contrasted with the very yang Tiger and the very yin crane or the yin of the mantis. Oddly enough, the first functional difference between the Tiger and the Crane is the way the tiger grips the floor with the toes while the crane allows for the articulation of the feet upon the floor (or allowing the Y'uan Ch'uan — the "Bubbling Well Point" at the middle of the foot to embrace the floor. I was aware that the study of these animal styles would definitely affect the way the actors handled the blades. I was happily surprised to see how the animal styles informed the actors' acting.

I had postulated the actor and the audience exist in Jungian terms: a collective unconscious, a personal unconscious, a conscious mind, and a persona (or mask) that is presented on stage (or in real life) and is read by an audience. I defined good acting as that acting in which a performer takes her/his mask and motivates it with the energy (libido, chi, pranyama, etc.) found in the collective unconscious. This energy is powerful but colorless until the actor (or person) shines this energy through the various prisms of the aforementioned states of mind.

Within the personal unconscious of the actor exist many "tricks" or cliches that, early on, the actor dug down deep into the collective unconscious to bring to the stage. When these tricks become "frozen," the actor has a new trick in his bag or tricks: "Deadly Theater" in the Brookian sense, or... these tricks can have a peculiar kind of wonder if they are executed with the spontaneity with which they were first learned. That good old lazzi is still immediate, if hackneyed. It is important for me to have the actor meet the audience with personae and take the audience to our collective unconscious to have an experience there. To do this, I rely on a movement theater.

The actor trains in things that move her/him (tiger wu shu, crane wu shu, Kundalini, whatever) and uses the energies found to power the personae on stage. To allow for this communication between actor and audience, the actor trains herself/himself in the various skills listed above. The actor also must communicate with the fellow performers in order for this "successful communication" with the audience to be achieved.

Thus the lab included the many above techniques to get the actor in touch with the primal energies of the collective unconscious, to use these energies to communicate with fellow performers on a certain primal level, and to perform a play using this technique to let the audience experience a kind of

"Verismo" on stage. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things to and with one another (from conversation to swordfighting) with primal energies.

"OPERATIC TRUTH"

One of my aims in the production of *Zastrozzi* was to get a kind of "operatic truth" out of actors who would react to one another honestly in a conversational reality. Another of my aims was to get as much physical spectacle in the sword fights as I possibly could. As the next millennium approaches, I believe that only magnificent "human effects" done in the theater will be able to rival the "special effects" that technological forms of entertainment will (and already do) provide.

All of the physical training enhanced these things with everything from growing trust due to increased ability to listen-and-respond physically, to increased strength and flexibility. The work with the animal forms not only enhanced the ability to animate the weaponry in a safe and exciting way, but began to underscore the acting "intent" with primal "need" and drive.

Into this laboratory experience, I invited Rene Moreno in his wheelchair.

After making up my mind, I called Rene to ask to interview him about the role, so that he knew what he was getting into. I was terribly afraid of telling him that I wanted him to train with the other actors in the same way as the lab had been going; that he would have a sword fight as the character of Verezzi, and a love scene, and that this was all part of an experiment the Kitchen Dog Theater was conducting.

The initial interview was startling for one main reason: my fearful anticipation of what this "wheelchair-bound actor" would say was all of my own making.

Rene was (and is) a consummate professional, and he welcomed the opportunity to play a character in a show. He wasn't afraid of doing a fight scene, so long as we worked together on making it as safe as we could for all concerned.

I was much more afraid of his handicap than he was. Of course this sounds like monumental simplicity, however, this was a major hurdle for me to vault at the beginning of the process.

GETTING RID OF FALLACIES

I also began to get educated on some fallacies I held in my perception. For instance, I knew Rene was paralyzed from the hips on down, and I thought of this as "dead weight." Rene informed me that we must always keep his legs in line with his hips so as not to injure his lower back. I also never considered the necessity to protect against chair sores from constant sitting. This initial interview was really something of a lesson in how stupid I am. I learned it well.

Rene entered in the lab sessions with the kind of commitment and abandon I had hoped he would. We quickly got used to lifting Rene out of his chair onto the weight bench for push days, or lifting him up to the trapeze for pull days. The yoga, T'ai Chi, Tiger, and Crane forms were not easy for Rene, so I modified a form of Hsing-I (a sister art to T'ai Chi Ch'uan that deals with energy going up the spine for martial purpose).

The first recording of a neutral reading (something we did often in the lab and listened to)



“I encountered some surprising ‘pluses and minuses’ in working with Rene.”

with Rene was most interesting. I sat at Rene's first reading and was totally unmoved. Rene, by habit, had done some homework on his role, and was reading his part with intent, but without any kind of personal commitment that moved me. As I sat in the reading, I hoped I was going to be able to find the animal within the very skilled, if glib, actor who was reading.

FINDING PERSONAL POWER

When I listened to the tape later that evening after the lab session, I was amazed how great Rene sounded when compared to the other actors who were doing neutral reading with the hope of ‘letting something happen (wu wei).’ Rene was unmistakably a skilled actor who could have his role at performance level with a two-week rehearsal period. I was looking, not for his acting skill, but for his personal power.

Rene entered into the rehearsals for the fight with alacrity and the obvious physical understanding of someone who had once studied dance and had been very talented. I encountered some surprising “pluses and minuses” in working with Rene. First of all, the full-length sword was simply too cumbersome for Rene to handle. We constructed a weapon that had a blade of about 24 inches... which we could sheath with a rather chic effect to the back of his chair.

Rene was comfortable coming down a rather steep ramp, and the immediate effect of Rene's coming down the ramp with a drawn sword was really quite an intimidating sight. He could turn himself immediately from the “angel in the wheelchair” to a demon coming down the ramp with a sword at breakneck speed in a microsecond.

USING ACTUAL SWORD TECHNIQUES

Rene met the challenge the other actors faced in that I was interested in actual sword techniques from various sword cultures and practices being done with as much skill and realism and verve as the actors could muster. We practiced in fencing-like gear for absolute protection as we drilled chops, slices, parries and martial practice with weaponry.

While I placed a great deal of anal retentive attention to fighting measure, I relied on controlled fighting techniques within the choreography rather than “point to the ceiling, point to the floor” blade work. Rene worked with our Hercules, his actor/combatant partner in his scene.

The first difficulty we faced was that when Drew (our Hercules) pressed down on Rene, Rene was in danger of falling over backward. This problem was immediately solved by Drew's dropping down into a low stance for anything that smacked of “corps-a-corps.” Training went on.

Night after night I listened to Rene acting with great professional skill, but without the animal of the collective unconscious. He was growing stronger with each session. I was amazed to discover how powerful his upper body was becoming. His bladework in the chair was passable. This went on for three weeks or fifteen lab sessions.

A TURNING POINT

Then something wonderful happened. It happened all at once in a particular lab session, and it all happened in the space of four hours. We began the session as usual, but this time when we lifted Rene to the trapeze, I could sense something different. As usual we lifted Rene and two of us spotted him by placing our arms under his knees and our arms behind him ready to catch him should his grip fail him.

On this particular night, Rene began chinning himself with such sudden power that his paralyzed legs began kicking from the knee, the force of his pulling was so great. When he got off the trapeze, he told us of how he could begin to feel the blood rushing through his legs due to the intensity of his exertion.

The same night, his bladework took on a new dimension. He began to animate the weapon as though his center was where his coccyx met the chair, and his touch of the center on the seat could direct the way his wheel would move. His grip on the blade lightened, hence he was able to get speed with control. He and Drew met with such a perfectly light ‘tintinabulation’ of blade touch that sparks literally ignited. Rene even let a natural impulse happen as he pushed off his partner for a cut from behind and as he did his legs flew off the resting spot for his feet on the chair because of the greater centripetal force. We tied his legs into his chair immediately.

That night during the neutral reading, Rene began his scene on cue, and I shall never forget the spontaneous “take” the rest of the cast did because Rene suddenly wasn't “acting” with his prowess, but connecting to his partner in the scene with the kind of primal energies I was looking for. He began unconsciously to use one hand or another to jerk the wheels of his chair to make his point because he “HAD TO.” He was swept into the scene with his fellow performer. His energy was rooting deep into the earth and soaring into the heavens. He was “truthing.” I was ecstatic!

Immediately we began reworking Rene's fight as he had begun to assimilate his power

from the chair, and at the same time creating a martial animation of weaponry. Sparks were literally flying within the confines of relaxed, controlled fighting and a strict adherence to correct fighting measure. Sparks were flying in his scenes too.

ARTICULATING WITH WHEELS

I was suddenly empowered to suggest he use his wheels the same way a Harlequin might use his legs during the flirtation scene with Julia. The wheels worked for Rene as articulators of expression in the same way legs worked for any other actor. He was bringing an exact and right energy to the movement of the scene. I was ecstatic!

Just before we opened, something began on the other side of the hill. Without realizing it, Rene had learned not only to root his power through the legs in his chair, he also began to realize that while in the chair, his center of gravity was lower than his acting partner. Rene was training hard, rehearsing hard, and unconsciously, neither he nor I nor his actor combatant partner was aware of Rene's growing strength. On many occasions (including the video I finally kept for archival purposes) Rene was disarming a 255 pound actor with a 550 pound bench press.

AN INTERESTING MOMENT: GOING TOO FAR

Perhaps my most interesting moment as director/fight choreographer was to give Rene the note that he had to lighten up and work with his partner rather than actually disarming his partner. That he was going too far. That on that particular rake he had to pull back.

I have the show and the choreography on video tape. The show was a success from both the critical and financial standpoint. What I learned in watching Rene made me respect the palpable power of a good actor, and made me a little more humble in my thinking regarding my movement skills and movement models.

Rene definitely accomplished all that I was hoping for in his performance, and he did it with a certain energy... not from the power of his legs and feet, as experienced from tiger or crane wu shu. He took his actor's energy and rooted it through the steel and wheels of his chair into the floor, both as an actor and as an actor-combatant.

I was often asked by audience members (and one of the critics!) why I put the character in a wheelchair. They didn't realize the actor himself was in a wheelchair. Several audience members reported that after the initial “shock” of an actor in a wheelchair in an intimate black box space, that the chair “disappeared” for them. His acting power was so great that it took audiences beyond the immediate visual. Audiences bought immediately into the impish

lothario using wheels instead of legs to perform harlequinade lazzi. Everyone went through the show unhurt which always makes a show a success.

My learning came in the form of a growing respect for any actor as good as Rene. Having worked with such a fine actor through fight scenes, love scenes, and just scene work, I shall be slow to perceive someone as “wheelchair bound” or “confined to a wheelchair” in the way I would have before this experience.

“Having worked with such a fine actor through fight scenes, love scenes, and just scene work, I shall be slow to perceive someone as ‘wheelchair bound’... in the way I would have before this experience.”

It also gave me a healthy respect for the soul Artaud was talking about. Rene eventually brought his soul to bear in motivating the sword, in playing his role, in moving inanimate wheels.

While I don't think my theory is any more than a good taxis for looking at human behavior or a training regiment for stage work, I believe more firmly than ever that the most important thing for any production within the theater is to stimulate the soul and to encourage the soul's blossoming.



Bill Lengfelder is on the faculty of the theatre department at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

Working and Living in L.A.

In this city I consider the job to be the last one I will ever get, even though I am searching daily. If something does turn up, it is a pleasant surprise.

BY
ROBERT
GOODWIN

HAVING LIVED AND WORKED IN NEW YORK and Los Angeles, and having trained with the SAFD, I'm going to attempt to explain the attitude towards the SAFD that I have encountered in the movie industry.

DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH, OR WHAT?

I am reminded of a student who had been studying T'ai Chi Chu'an for twenty years asking a teacher of mine to critique his form and my teacher asked, "Do you want the truth, or what?" I am "honest to a fault" so if you don't want my honest professional opinion, stop reading. I do not want to, nor will I, get involved in any ego-driven dialogue that is politically offensive to anyone. This article is an attempt to help the SAFD understand how others may see it and written out of respect for my instructors in the SAFD. It would take too much time to express how Mr. Crean, Mr. Martinez, and Mr. Boushey positively influenced my career and life. I believe in one of my favorite Chinese sayings, "We are standing on our teachers' shoulders."

In the article "And One For All" in Volume 2, Issue 2 of the *City of Angels* newsletter for June, 1995, the following observation was made:

"that television and film people are not impressed with SAFD training and that the majority of stunt performers hold our training and talents in contempt."

I am sure that David Boushey is addressing this issue, as he is the only fight master (that I am aware of) who has successfully crossed over to television and film work. Speaking from my own experience, I quickly discovered that the stunt film/TV network is a closed, selfish group of stunt coordinators and stuntpersons. Understandably, if your life depends on a gag, you want to be surrounded by people you trust.

The stunt community, as I see it, is not that interested in specialists. The stunt community wants people that can safely pull off any gag from a fight, to a full body burn, to a car crash, with safety being important, but getting the shot being the priority.

Basically SAFD fights are too safe and too "staged" for film and TV. Before anyone gets upset, let me explain. The camera needs to see the setup, obviously, just as any actor needs a cue, but in film/TV fighting,

measure is something that is ignored for a camera angle and reactions are usually smaller and more realistic. On the other hand, think of how many fight scenes you see on film that, after a strike, regardless of the intensity or technique used, the victim quickly turns his/her head back to face the attacker. This drives me crazy but the reason for it is usually because the actor has to stay in frame and/or is making eye contact for the next cue. Sometimes this is necessary because there is no rehearsal time to integrate the fight scene into the scene.

SPEED IS SECONDARY

Speed in any fight is secondary. A staged fight, to me, is one that is so comfortable for the actors that they can race through it. I have scenes choreographed by some SAFD fight masters where speed seemed to be of primary importance. Not that one must overreact to each parry or punch, but when I can't see the intent, I am not convinced that what I am witnessing is happening for the first time. I realize that, once the play opens, the fight is in the hands of the fight captain and the stage manager.

This brings up two points. First, there is a big difference between what I refer to as "controlled fighting" and stage combat. The result is:

"Robert Goodwin directed the violence with teeth-clenching realism, but without resorting to sensationalism."

— *The New York Times*

"...breathtakingly realistic sword-and-dagger combat that frequently drew gasps from the opening night audience."

— *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*

"blistering fight direction by Robert Goodwin."

— *Los Angeles Times*

"We're left rattled by scenes of graphic violence."

— *New York Newsday*

What I am most proud of in my twelve years of choreography is an "injury free" career. That covers my very first job to the play I am currently working on. I feel that this is due to training the actors, giving them a specific warm-up routine, and correcting or changing the fight as needed during the rehearsal process.

Which brings up the second point: the rehearsal process. I make myself available for three to five weeks on most productions. The

trade-off is that I don't make as much money as most fight coordinators, but for the theatre I am a fight director. For film/TV I am a fight coordinator. I would no sooner think of leaving a production before opening night than the production director would. Even if the fight is very short, besides my regularly scheduled rehearsals, I watch other rehearsals, runthroughs, a preview, and opening night. Then I give notes. My integrity dictates that I add to the production quality of any play that I work with. Personally, I can only achieve this by being an integral part of the rehearsal process. (See "Needed: Fight Director").

A UNIQUE ROLE

Before going any further, I must state that I do not want to be a stunt person. We of the SAFD are unique in the film/TV industry. I am a weapons/fight expert with over thirty years martial arts experience and twelve years of European weapons training. Most European weapons choreography in the film industry is done by William Hobbs, Bob Anderson, or Victor Paul, and it's like the man said, "I'm surprised it's as good as it is," when one considers the lack of training, rehearsal time, and ability of some actors.

An attitude adjustment may be in order. An announcement was made that the SAFD was here in Los Angeles and a workshop was being taught. After a meeting, some of us talked about a statement that went something like "We are here, so take advantage of our expertise." So what? There are a lot of qualified people in this city. We are all small fish in a very large pond in L.A.

WHERE THEATRE IS "A HOBBY"

To begin with, theatre credentials give you a lot of experience and, hopefully, some contacts, but they don't mean a thing in a city where theatre is a hobby. For most actors and directors, theatre is a showcase and that's all. The important aspects of theatre such as production quality, commitment, trust, and "for the love of" are rare in a city where an evening's production is canceled due to rain.

The "audience" canceled a production (because of rain) of *Carol's Eve* at the Met Theatre. Alicia Silverstone, Allen Garfield, and my wife, Devora Millman, as the lead. You figure it out, I can't. I'm stating this to drive home a point. Film in L.A. is not Broadway, Off-Broadway, or regional theatre, where a fight director is not only needed, but appreciated. God! If that were only true in the film industry in L.A... Don't misunderstand me. There is some great theatre in this town,

but the problem is that great theatre is the exception, not the norm. Regional theatre and Shakespeare Festivals do maintain the

"There is some great theatre in this town, but the problem is that great theatre is the exception, not the norm."

traditions of the theatre, as well as discipline, protocol, and integrity that result in a production quality that keeps theatre alive.

These qualities are lacking in the:

- Yes, I am SAG;
- Talk to my agent;
- Shoot out of sequence;
- Here are today's script changes;
- Time to rehearse? Are you kidding?
- You are on your twelfth hour on the set and they are still working the most demanding fight scene you have;
- Where's craft services;
- Do I get a [salary] bump for that?
- You have a great look, but I can't use you;
- You have great skills but not the look that we're after;
- You're not ethnic enough;

world of film and television.

You know what? That is the nature of the beast. You accept it as it is and try to compromise as little as possible to get your foot in the door or you move to the midwest and teach.

A quick note on martial arts. Mr. Martinez was the only fight master that ever asked me to demonstrate and videotape my martial arts skills. I mention this because he is open-minded about other arts and always a student. It would help the SAFD's credibility if Asian weapons were taught at the National Stage Combat Workshop.



The motto in L.A. is "be ready." I must be able to choreograph or perform a traditional katana fight, a Filipino knife fight, or a smallsword duel tomorrow. My training is as valuable as any actor's. That being said, the film industry is basically looking for coaches and trainers. But, if you have a look the industry likes, you may get a part. Otherwise, unless you get the training that Mr. Boushey offers or are a relative of a stunt person, I have absolutely no idea how to break into that network and I say this after working three days on *Virtuosity* in a fight around the ring of the Ultimate Championship Fight scene. Which, by the way, wound up on the cutting room floor.

In this city, I consider the job I have as the last one I will ever get, even though I search daily. If something turns up, then that is a pleasant surprise.

A few suggestions for the SAFD's future:

- Acknowledge that there are others with skills and some with skills that you don't have. And take advantage of them.
- Set up a Night at the Fights to showcase your and your students' skills.
- Change your titles to fight expert, or Maestro, rather than fight masters, because you may be on the set with "judo" Gene LaBelle and he will ask for a lesson and then teach you something.
- A little humility goes a long way even in a city where you have to blow your own horn.
- Give free demo/lectures anywhere, especially for kids.
- Stop considering those you have coached as competition. If you truly want "collective efforts to create art," set the example.
- Acknowledge that there is enough work for all, rather than spending one or two weeks (or days) at a gig and rushing off to the next, allowing actors to "work on it themselves for a while" as I was once told. This is no way to train, let alone choreograph.
- The fight masters should have meetings to compare notes and critique one another, with love, for your discipline, not to stress stylistic differences. If you, the leaders, can't agree on the basic principles of your arts, how can you not expect a degeneration of those same arts?
- Stay in shape. We all have limitations but we should be able to do ninety percent of what we choreograph and all of what we teach.
- Set up a mentor program for those who have not only the skills, but especially the character to carry on the banner of the SAFD. I am reminded of another favorite Chinese saying, "The only thing more difficult to find than a good teacher is a good student. One with character."

■ I would love to see the fight masters in action, in whatever scene, or production they would enjoy doing. I know you'd have to adjust your schedules, but what a show...

■ Have an annual party, bash, swordfest sans swords, anything you want to call it to bring people together — not fight masters, teachers, actor/combatants, etc. — just people.

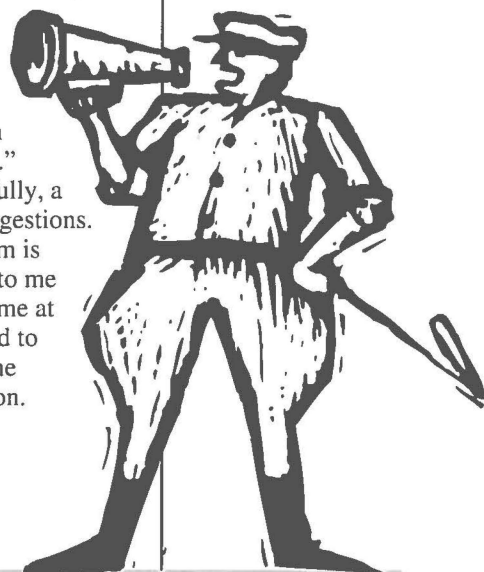
■ Set up a grant program for under-privileged people so that you can say, "I gave back."

The list is endless, but as I invested my time to prepare it, we all most "invest in loss." This article is my initial investment. If I can help in any way, let me know. But be advised, my ways are limited. "I am humble and I have every right to be."

This article is written as, hopefully, a helpful insight along with some suggestions. No malice, no accusation or criticism is meant. Anyone wishing to respond to me personally may do so by writing to me at the address below. I will not respond to any difference of opinion through the *Fight Master* or any other publication.

Good luck, comrades in arms.

Bob Goodwin
3745 Military Avenue, #103
Los Angeles, CA 90034



NEEDED: FIGHT DIRECTOR

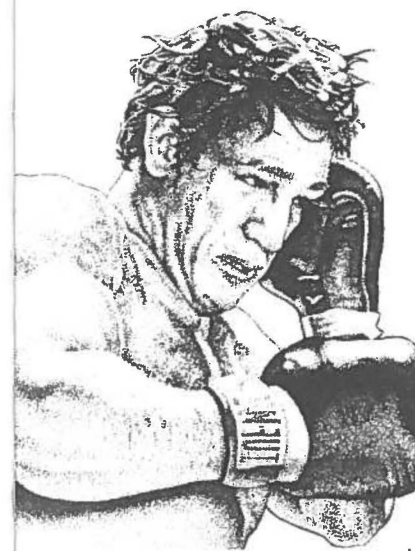
- to attend production meetings and coordinate costumes, set, props, and the fight sequences
- to meet with and discuss the directors intent
- to meet with the stage manager(s) and assign their responsibilities
- to choreograph the appropriate fight scene (within the actor/character's choice and the director's intent)
- to direct the fight scene(s) throughout the rehearsal process, including technical rehearsals, previews, and openings
- to be available should the stage manager or fight captain need your assistance during the run of the production
- to provide the director, actors, and the stage manager with a written copy of the warm-up exercises and the fight scenes
- to have a post-production meeting with all concerned, if requested
- to have a minimum of twelve years experience in "combat mime"
- to have a minimum of six years experience choreographing professional actors
- to love theater, your art/craft, and life

This production is looking for a fight director — not a fight coordinator who stays two weeks, choreographs the fight(s) and is off to the next job. We feel that a collaboration between the director, the fight director, and the cast is an ongoing process that is constantly growing and changing.

Therefore we feel that the fight director's presence is necessary for the quality of production this play deserves. If you cannot commit the above requirements, please do not apply. Thank you for your professionalism and please understand that we have a standard that must be maintained to perpetuate our heritage and our love for the theatre.

Producing Artistic Director
The "Love of Theatre Complex of the World"

Acting Tough



BY
J. DAVID
BRIMMER
and
DALE
ANTHONY
GIRARD

ACTING EXERCISES FOR ACTOR/COMBATANTS TO AID THE INTEGRATION OF ACTING AND FIGHTING

THE "BALL GAMES" AND "PAIN GAME" OF our previous columns are designed to develop physical readiness, focus, concentration, eye contact, communication, partnering, eye and hand coordination and a sense of physical and emotional responsiveness on the part of the student.

Although these games are initially used at the beginning of our stage combat classes, we tend to reintroduce them throughout the progression of our classes. After technique has been introduced in class, we find it beneficial to go back and re-examine the emotional and physical implications of "to hit" and "being hit." The energy and experiences the students get from these games is then taken into their routines, helping remove the "academic" or "mechanical" delivery of technique.

As the mechanics of stage combat are introduced in class the ball games are used to introduce the melding of intention with technique. They allow the actor to make the step from analytical acting to physical responsiveness.

These games, however, are only the foundations of effective process, being devoid of circumstances. At this stage, therefore, we introduce an exercise that helps the actor to look at "being hit" from the specifics of the characters, the scene, situation, surroundings and circumstances. These are known as Task Exercises.

TASK EXERCISE: TAKING THE BLOW

In analyzing the moves and actions of a fight, it is important to always take into account what has happened before. A slap to the face, knee to the ribs and cut to the arm all have a specific value and affect the character in a specific way. As discovered in the ball games, any aggressive action that lands on the character's body provokes an involuntary reaction of some sort. The degree and length of that reaction depends partially on the action and its specific value, and the constitution of the character.

Each blow or action that lands on a character, no matter how insignificant, affects

their future choices in the encounter to some extent. The degree of the action also determines how much it affects the execution of any movements that follow it and for how long the pain should last.

Combining the information you have about the character, their situation and surroundings with the emotional and physical data gathered in the ball games, the student should ask questions like:

- "How does it feel?"
- "How does it effect their movements and further actions?"
- "How does it effect their emotional state?"
- "Is it bleeding, throbbing or going numb?"

As they determine the severity of the blow, they need to be specific, knowing exactly where they were cut, kicked, hit or stabbed. Just as the point of impact from the

"As [the students] determine the severity of the blow, they need to be specific, knowing exactly where they were cut, kicked, hit, or stabbed."

"shot-put" had to be exacting, so does that of any weapon.

Do not accept answers such as, "I was hit in the face"; the student must define the point of impact in a manner like "I was struck on the left side of the face, on the upper lip-driving my K-9 tooth into the lip, busting the inside of the lip and loosening the tooth." If there is blood in the mouth, they should taste the blood and feel the specific locale of the pain. Specific acting choices lead to specific actions and reactions.

In acting a fight there are things that most actors have never, thankfully, experienced and cannot in any way recreate from their personal memory. Most of us have never been in a life or death struggle, received a minor or serious injury during that struggle or, in one way or another, been killed. These are common occurrences in a stage fight but they cannot be experienced directly on the stage.

The ball games, reading and research can only help in understanding something anatomically but generally cannot give the

actor the physical feeling of the occurrence. These are actions for which the student needs a task. A Task is the process of creating the "feeling" of a particular occurrence by imagining it to be like something more in the student's realm of experience.

In this technique the words "as if" are used to stimulate them. For example:

■ If cut to the side or belly, they would locate the place of the pain and then it is "as if" someone had duct-taped the flesh in that area so that every time they moved their body it would sharply pull at the skin. Depending on the location of the tape, even breathing could affect it.

■ If stabbed, they need to locate the place where the sword (knife, dagger, pencil, etc.) pierced the body; exactly - not in the stomach, but where, down to the inch. Now they can imagine "as if" they were wearing a tight girdle and there was a thumb-tack sitting just at that spot. Every move they make aggravates that spot, and to breathe pushes the tack further into the body.

"If stabbed, they... imagine 'as if' there was a thumb-tack sitting at just that spot. Every move they make aggravates that spot, and to breathe pushes the tack further in..."

■ If bleeding, they need to find the point of the wound and then imagine "as if" someone were slowly pouring warm water on that spot. They can feel the skin getting wet, the clothing clinging to the flesh and the wet spot creeping further out away from the point of origin. They can also constantly feel the warm spot where the water is begin poured, but as the water seeps out and across the body it can cool holding the clothing against the skin and brining goose-bumps to the surface.

■ If dying, it is "as if" they are falling asleep. Not an instant drop off to sleep, but a gradual relinquishment of consciousness. In dying, like sleep most of us experience the successive loss of senses until we are gone.

The practice of being specific about targets within the ball games must be applied in the task exercises. It is important to be as precise as possible about the location and

nature of the injury and then for the actor to find a detail that would affect them "as if" they were experiencing the natural occurrence. Be sure to explore how this injury affects the character's concentration, balance, control and rhythm.

In looking at the effects of a blow on future actions, remember that the strength of a blow can be psychological as well as physical.

A cut to the cheek may sting a little, but it would not effect the physical execution of further blade-play. It tells the combatant that they could have been hit and that they are lucky to still have an eye, or be alive. That puts them on guard and affects all their future choices.

In contrast, a hard elbow blow to the stomach received while disarming one's opponent affects the combatant in an entirely different way. The blow may have knocked the wind out of the combatant, partially collapsing the body, so that the pain and physical reaction are larger. It also varies their psychological and tactical positions. The value of the reaction is not just how hard the action hits, but the overall situation in which the blow was received.

In the playing of the ball games all the students focused on was commitment to the action and reaction of the attacks, devoid of character and situation. The experiences of the moment can be carried into a routine, but they must be molded to the perimeters of the character and their circumstances.

The ball games also do not effectively explore the value of the action or the reaction in the grand scheme of things and therefore do not provide the actor with a complete spectrum of choices. They are, however, one of the safest ways to let the actor connect and commit to aggressive actions and respond to such energy.

Task exercises are one of the next steps used to help the actor find the emotion and physical elements within a fight or physical conflict. They cannot be expected to experience death, dying, physical penetration, internal or external hemorrhaging in class or on stage- but they can find a task to simulate the experience and play it within the scene.

The actor's job is to create an illusion not try to survive a reality, they do not have to die on stage- it only must appear "as if" they died.

■ ■ ■

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Opinions expressed in "The Pen and the Sword" are those of the reviewer and may not reflect the opinion of the Society of American Fight Directors.

BY
DALE
ANTHONY
GIRARD

FIGHT DIRECTING FOR THE THEATRE by J. Allen Suddeth

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Press, 1996. ISBN 0-435-08674-X. Paperback, Pp. 344 (Pp. 322 text, Pp. 7 glossary, Pp. 2 bibliography, Pp. 12 index). Bibliography & index. (109 B&W photographs, 48 prints). \$39.95

For over twenty years J. Allen Suddeth has plied his craft as fight director within the theatrical, motion picture and television industries. His knowledge of the dramatic medium, movement, and directing; his eye for detail; and his thorough procedures are some of the many reasons why he has taught at such schools as Juliard, the Lee Strasberg Institute and the Stella Adler Conservatory.

Other assets include Mr. Suddeth's long list of credits (including several Broadway productions and over 600 television shows), his high work ethic, and the superior quality of his craft. For these reasons he is in constant demand in professional theatres throughout the U.S and has earned recognition as one of the eleven fight masters within the SAFD.

"the wealth of common knowledge"

In his recent book, *Fight Directing for the Theatre*, Mr. Suddeth has maintained his high standards. His text exemplifies his detailed process and procedures, providing the reader with valuable information about stage combat and the complex process of choreographing and directing fights in the theatre. The book stems from the realization that "the wealth of common knowledge that I take for granted is not available to those who are coming up through the ranks." [p. xi]

This is quite true. There are no books on the market (in or out of print) that address this particular topic in such a clear and accessible manner. Truly this is the first book of its kind in stage combat.

Fight Directing for the Theatre is a user-friendly text book designed to provide helpful information to a variety of readers. It is not a manual on swordplay or unarmed techniques, but rather a handbook to the various practical and theoretical principals used in the process of staging a fight.

As a handbook, the information is clearly divided into categories that can be quickly accessed by the reader. The text is divided into six chapters and four appendices. Each chapter

GUIDE TO FIGHT DIRECTION THAT COVERS THE BIG PICTURE AND A HISTORY OF DUELS IN FRANCE

covers a specific topic such as safety, staging techniques, acting the fight, weapons selection and maintenance, stage blood and firearms.

Each chapter is then subdivided into specific topics under each heading. This breakdown is clearly marked throughout the text as well as being spelled out in the table of contents. This makes the text quite valuable to students of stage combat, teachers, directors, producers, costumers, technicians and so on.

There probably isn't anyone within the dramatic community that couldn't gain useful information from this text. This is due in part to Mr. Suddeth's thorough coverage of the topic. His text does not simply explain how to choreograph a fight sequence, it goes into great detail — explaining the process from preproduction to closing night. Part of the detail in his book are a variety of charts and checklists for costumers, props masters, stage managers, production teams, etc.

"Mr. Suddeth... constantly addresses safety and maintains a sense of humor throughout the text."

The text itself is clear, concise and well written. Although Mr. Suddeth is dealing with a topic that is both his livelihood and could be potentially dangerous if misused, he constantly addresses safety and maintains a sense of humor throughout the text. This is helped in part by various comic illustrations provided by cartoonist Greg Poretta. These are used to light-heartedly make a point in the text.

The over 100 photographs used in the book include production stills and publicity photos from the span of Mr. Suddeth's career. These stills have obviously been carefully selected to support specific topics addressed within the text. This is also true of the other photographs and historical prints used within the book. They are situated close to the subject matter, often on the same or facing page. This helps the reader to visualize what is being expressed and allows the reader to effectively move through the text without having to flip through pages to find the supportive material.

The text closes with a series of appendices including a detailed list of "Theatrical Arms Suppliers" as well as listing providers of specialty props and equipment and various locations to inquire about professional stage combat training. This section of the book also provides the series of "checklists" mentioned earlier. Mr. Suddeth also furnishes his readers with a copy of the SAFD glossary of terms and a bibliography which could be helpful in further reading and research.

"Mr. Suddeth... provides the reader with the big picture. He shows how the fight director functions as an intricate member of the production team."

One cannot write a book concerning a creative art form without conflicting with someone else's ideal of the process, but Mr. Suddeth has done an excellent job of trying to cover all the bases. The one qualm I have with this book, if one could call it that, is that there are some instances where Mr. Suddeth puts forth his personal style as a "universal" rule.

One such example is in Chapter 2 under the heading of "Fight Notation" where he presents the reader with the "Standard parry-and-attack numbers recognized internationally." [p. 100] He then lists his preference for a numerical system which is not recognized internationally. His system is not used by the Fight Directors Canada, the recently divided Society of British Fight Directors, nor is it put forth in several books on stage combat including those by William Hobbs and Arthur Wise. In fact, several of his colleagues in the SAFD don't use his form of "5 and 5a."

This, however, along with other directorial and acting choices put forth in the text are really only artistic differences. These personal choices, however, when put forth as absolutes can mislead or confuse beginning students. I must admit that these instances are quite few and when they do occur they are never concerning safety issues and in no way detract from the whole of the text.

an enthusiastic recommendation

In the seven years I've been writing "The Pen & The Sword," I have never been more enthusiastic about a book on stage combat. I thoroughly enjoyed reading Mr. Suddeth's text and only wish that it had been available when I began my training in the fight biz.

I would recommend this text to anyone in the theatrical community who might have contact with a stage fight. Although the title is

Fight Directing for the Theatre you might regard it as "The Theatre and Stage Fights." Although this text provides a fight director with a wellspring of detailed information, the primary focus is safety and theatricality and the book goes well beyond the bounds of fight directing.

the big picture

Mr. Suddeth's book provides the reader with the big picture. He shows how the fight director works as an intricate member of the production team and details how they collaborate with the various members of the production team to make the fights a safe and effective part of the whole production.

Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth's book *Fight Directing for the Theatre* is a must have for any serious theatrical student and a valuable resource for teachers and directors of stage combat. I recommend this book without reservation and am truly glad to see such a book finally on the market.

THE DUEL: IT'S RISE AND FALL IN EARLY MODERN FRANCE

translated and edited by Trista Selous

New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990. ISBN 0 300 04028 8. Hard cover, Pp. 252 (Pp. 242 text, Pp. 4 bibliography, Pp. 6 index). Bibliography & index. No Illustrations.

French historian Francois Billacois, of the University of Paris, has compiled in his text *The Duel* an in-depth description of the social, political, moral and religious implications of France's obsession with civil conflict. "This is a historical study," says Billacois in his introduction, "which aims to describe for a given period (the first two centuries of what are called 'modern' times) and for a defined area (the kingdom of France) the establishment over time of [dueling's] constitutive elements and the stages of its decline..." [p. 1]

a comprehensive study

And that it does. *The Duel* provides the reader with a comprehensive study which is extensively researched and immensely detailed. Aside from addressing its immediate topic of dueling, it has relevance to literature, sociology and anthropology as well as to a broad range of European history.

It is important to note that the copy of *The Duel* readily available today (and reviewed herein) is not actually Billacois's text. The original text, *Le duel*, was translated into English by Trista Selous, and pared down into a less laborious edition.¹ Editing condensed the body of the text by about a third, making the book more accessible to those outside stringent academic circles.

not a light or simple read

Ms. Selous's editing of Billacois's text does not, however, mean that this text is a light or simple read. It is not. Although the information is fascinating, the book often reads like a college history book. Unlike Baldick's book on the same subject, Billacois's text is overly dry and can tax the reader.² This is due to the amount of reference material needed to present the reader with an understanding of the social, religious and political conditions of the first two centuries of "modern times."

While Baldick's book presents personal accounts of duels, Billacois explains *why* the dueling phenomenon developed, expanded, exploded, and eventually died as well as various facets of the human condition that lead to these events or developed out of their aftermath.

extensively researched text

The text is extensively researched, with primary sources used to piece together a tangible line of progression. In his introduction Billacois tells his readers that the information is taken from "theoretical writings (codes of honor and moral refutations) and concrete testimonies (fulsome or laconic anecdotes, not necessarily in agreement on the same example of single combat), legislative texts and jurisprudence and records of actual legal proceedings, the analyses of Catholic causists and the beautified or highly charged images of poets, songwriters or engravers." [p. 1-2]

The text is presented in twenty chapters which are subsequently divided into four parts. Each part looks at a different stage or aspect of dueling. The material is presented in chronological order, proceeding in a comfortable and comprehensive progression.

Although the text can be a laborious read, the information is there. The reader advances from one point to the next in a sound manner. The duel is chronicled from its medieval origins to its apex as a public "judgment of God," presided over by the king, and ensuing decline into an illegal and subversive practice, condemned by the church and prosecuted by the secular authority.

origins, peak, and decline of the duel

Part One explores "The Early Stages of the French Duel" including the origins of the word "duel," how the practice came into being, and an informative comparison of the French practice to dueling philosophies in other European countries.

The second, and largest, part of the text deals with the rise and "peak" of dueling. This

section explores the forms and codes of the duel. Here Billacois illustrates changing attitudes of the monarchy and the different social classes towards dueling, and the religious and moral arguments designed to justify or condemn it.

Part Three looks at "The Wane and Its Limits." Here the "Beginning of the End" is described and the factors of the decline and subsequent death are given.

symbols and concepts of dueling

The final part of the text is not a conclusion, but an intriguing look at specific symbols and concepts of dueling. This is the one part of the text that seems a little out of the chronology of the previous parts and chapters. Here tangible, ethical, theological and political issues are expressed and defined. This section analyses symbols and concepts (the weapon, blood, honor, justice, etc.) which are expressed earlier in the text but not fully explained. The final chapter, "The Duel In and Beyond Time," ties everything together and bring the text to a sound conclusion.

"Although it is difficult to read at times, the insight gained can be beneficial."

The four page bibliography (in the edited text) at the end of the book is a fascinating look at Billacois's source material and to the texts available for reading and research upon the topic. The one problem with this impressive list of primary source material is that a great deal of these texts are in French.³

Francois Billacois's *The Duel* is a comprehensive, thoroughly researched study of the duel in sixteenth and seventeenth century France. His book uses the duel as a reference point to the understanding of a specific period, society and political system, with its moral and aesthetic sensibilities and spiritual background. It explores the meaning of violence and of its manifestations in early modern society.

Although it is difficult to read at times, the insight gained can be beneficial to the historian, actor and fight director. For the theatrical reader the book explains the "Why" behind various opinions, concepts and beliefs of dueling. Billacois's *The Duel* is an intriguing and informative text and well worth the read.

■ ■ ■

¹ Baldick, Robert. *The Duel*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1965. [reprinted, London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1987.] Reviewed in the Pen & the Sword, *Fight Master* Spring 1991, Vol. XIV, #1, pp. 45-46. Baldick's text has recently been reprinted.

² If you are interested in further research and can read French, you might do better reading Billacois' original text with the complete bibliography and research notes.

Put to the Test

RESULTS OF THE SAFD'S PROFICIENCY SKILLS TEST THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

MAY

Freehold

Date: May 11, 1996

Instructor: Geoffrey Alm

Adjudicator: David Boushey

Lisa Nakamura	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword
Michael De Laurentis	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword
Michael Crawley	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword <i>recommended</i>
Tom Elliott	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword <i>recommended</i>
Lacy Altwine	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword <i>recommended</i>
Matt Orme	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword <i>recommended</i>
Ryan Spickard	Broadsword, QS, Smallsword <i>recommended</i>

Niagara University

Date: May 12, 1996

Instructor: Steve Vaughan

Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

Elisabeth Murray	R & D, UA, QS
J.B. Becton	R & D, UA, QS
Shaun Sheley	R & D, UA, QS
Brian Myslyni	R & D, UA, QS
Chris Wisner	R & D, UA, QS

JUNE

Video

Date: June 30, 1996

Instructor: David Doersch

Adjudicator: Dale Girard

Michelle Ladd	SS
Dale Hall II	SS
Nora Wrobel	SS
Spencer Maughon	SS

JULY

Engarde, Minneapolis

Date: July 2, 1996

Instructor: Michael Anderson

Adjudicator: David Woolley

Sarah Skala	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS
James Ball II	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS
Reid A. Hegland	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS
Dayne Jean Walter	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS

AUGUST

Great Lakes Medieval Faire

Date: August 1, 1996

Instructor: Spencer Humm

Adjudicator: David Woolley

John C. Davis	Rapier & Dagger, UA, BS, QS
Gregory Isaac	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS
Jennifer Hampton	Rapier & Dagger, UA, QS
Edward Ray Goodwin, Jr.	Rapier & Dagger, UA, BS, QS

Bristol Renaissance Faire

Date: August 2, 1996

Instructor: Douglas Mumaw

Adjudicator: David Woolley

Judi Lewis	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS <i>recommended</i>
Michael Yaw	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS <i>recommended</i>
Ron Scot Fry	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
James Bland	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Skip Fox	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Tawn Jones	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS

Theatre West Virginia

Date: August 14, 1996

Instructor: Jean Paul Scheidler

Adjudicator: David Woolley

John Holley	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Jesse Scott	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Kristine K. Norman	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Karyn Morris	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Cass Cornwall	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Marcy Golub	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Christopher A. Borcroft	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
John Morris	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Kyle G. Shawell	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Date: August 30, 1996

Instructor: Drew Fracher

Adjudicator: Eric Fredricksen

Mary Ellen Allison	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Jacob Thomas	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Toby S. Pruett	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Davod Frydrychowski	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed

Utah Shakespeare Festival

Date: August 30, 1996

Instructor: Christopher Villa

Adjudicator: Drew Fracher

David A. Cooper	Rapier & Dagger, UA, BS & Shield
Shawn L. Martin	Rapier & Dagger, UA, BS & Shield
Tyson Gardner	Rapier & Dagger, UA, BS & Shield

SEPTEMBER

New York City

Date: September 10, 1996

Instructors: Jamie Cheatham, Tim Brown, Gregg Rochman

Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

Loraine Ressegger	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Sara Jones	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Shawn Hughart	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Scott Jones	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Candace Kendall-Browne	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, BS
Dale Berg	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Frank Smith	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword

New York Fight Ensemble

Date: September 16, 1996

Instructor: Ricki G. Ravitts

Adjudicator: David Leong

Tim Zay	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Denise Dalfo	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Tony Rust	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Robin Weiss	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Randy Burns	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Kyle Kulish	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Date: September 29, 1996

Instructor: Gregory Hoffman

Adjudicator: Eric Fredricksen

Alistair Logan	Sword & Shield, QS, Smallsword
Erin Fiedler	Sword & Shield, QS, Smallsword
Amanda Walker	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, BS

Tine Colorado College

Date: November 18, 1996

Instructor: Gregory Hoffman

Adjudicator: Dale Girard

Erin Rollman	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Erik Edburg	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Holly Storm	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Brooke Vick	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Jacob Groethe	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Erik Heger	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Ondrej Slacalek	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Nathan Welton	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Emmet Bellville	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Maria Grundmann	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword

Vulcan's Forge

Date: November 22, 1996

Instructor: Lewis Shaw

Adjudicator: Dale Girard

Stanton Davis	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
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DECEMBER

Penn State University

Date: December 8, 1996

Instructors: Jane Ridley, Mark Olson

Adjudicator: Drew Fracher

Carla Hargrove	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Mario Schugel	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Allesandra Paloschi	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Steve Wilson	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Heather Landry	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Cynthia Baldessare	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Tyler Burrell	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword
Jeremy Hall	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, Broadsword

CORRECTION

In the Fall 1995 "Put to the Test" the correct affiliation for actor/combatants Stephen Lada, Joyce Peifer, Al Myska, Adam Konowe, and Kevin Robertson should have read: the Noble Blades, Reston Community Players in Reston, Virginia.

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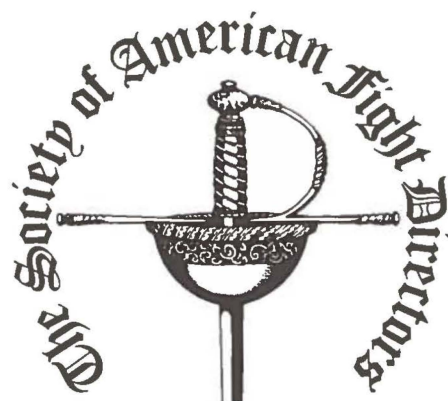
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